

**REMARKS**

Claims 1-16 are pending, new claims 28-31 are added and claims 17-27 are withdrawn.

Claims 1-2, 9, 11, and 15-16 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 5,711,981 to Wilson et al. ("Wilson"). Claim 1 was rejected under 35 U.S.C 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 5,741,536 to Mauer et al. ("Mauer"). Claims 12-14 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Wilson. Claim 3 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Wilson in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,098,307 to Pikus. Claims 3-7 and 10 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Wilson in view of U.S. Patent No. 2,682,827 to Gressly. Claim 8 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Wilson in view of U.S. Patent No. 2,153,572 to Kennedy. Each of these rejections is respectfully traversed.

Claim 1 presently recites, in combination with the other elements, that the food product having a length greater than a length of the steam sleeve such that the food product at least partially blocks both the entrance and exit during at last part of the step of passing the food product through the steam sleeve. This is not disclosed in either Wilson or Mauer. Further, both Wilson and Mauer teach away from having such comparative lengths. For example, in Wilson the steam chamber 32 has an entrance door 30 and an exit door 38, and thus no need for the meat M to block both the entrance and exit of the chamber. In Mauer, a continuous meat product would have difficulty traveling the spiral conveyor.

New claim 28 recites "generating the flow of steam in the steam sleeve and circulating the flow of steam in the steam sleeve within a channel inwardly open to an interior of the sleeve while the food product is passing therethrough." The Office action, p. 6, identifies items 136, 142 and S as being a channel in Wilson. However, those items do not form a channel inwardly open to an interior. Instead, Wilson describes that steam enters through supply header 136, flows along the inner side of the side walls 134, then exits along the outer side of the side walls 134. There is no disclosure than the inner side

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of the side walls 134 are a channel, and certainly no disclosure that the channel is inwardly open to an interior. Accordingly, new claim 28 is believed to be patentable.

In view of the foregoing comments, reconsideration and allowance of claims 1-16, as well as allowance of new claims 28-31, are respectfully requested.

The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any additional fees which may be required in this application to Deposit Account No. 06-1135.

Respectfully submitted,

FITCH, EVEN, TABIN & FLANNERY

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/Jon A. Birmingham/

Jon A. Birmingham  
Registration No. 51,222

FITCH, EVEN, TABIN & FLANNERY  
120 S. LaSalle Street, Suite 1600  
Chicago, Illinois 60603-3406  
Telephone: 312.577.7000  
Facsimile: 312.577.7007  
502459